



FSSA News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FSSA Announces 18 counties as Pre-Qualified Finalists in Pre-K Pilot Program

State Seeks Proposals from Counties to Participate

Indianapolis (June 4, 2014) - The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration ("FSSA") today announced the selection of 18 counties as finalists for the five-county early learning pilot grant program established by the 2014 General Assembly. The pilot program provides funding for pre-kindergarten for low income 4-year-olds in five counties, with services delivered via public schools, accredited private schools, and providers who have achieved Level 3 or Level 4 in Paths to QUALITY™, Indiana's voluntary child care quality rating and improvement system.

The pre-qualified counties represent 12 urban and six rural counties from all geographic regions of the state (Northeast, Northwest, Central, Southeast and Southwest) and have an estimated 17,000 eligible 4-year-olds who are not currently receiving early learning services. The 18 counties are Allen, Bartholomew, Delaware, Elkhart, Grant, Howard, Jackson, Kosciusko, Lake, Lawrence, Madison, Marion, Noble, St. Joseph, Tippecanoe, Vanderburgh, Vigo and Wayne.

"We're on track and working to design a program that will be successful and will help the children who participate in it be successful as well," said Debra Minott, Secretary of Family and Social Services Administration. "We look forward to partnering with the counties to assess their readiness and implement a strong program."

In narrowing down the list of eligible counties to 18, FSSA, with the assistance of its advisory work group, examined more than a dozen objective measures of suitability including the estimated number of children not currently receiving early learning services, the number of eligible providers, and the percentage of children living in poverty in each county. The advisory group, composed of early education experts, included academic researchers from Ball State, Notre Dame and Indiana University; staff representatives from FSSA, State Budget Agency, the Indiana Department of Education and the Center for Education and Career Innovation; members of the Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC); and external organizations including the Indiana Philanthropy Alliance and the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children.

Interested parties from each county are invited to submit a written Statement of County Readiness addressing certain county readiness measures, including the county's ability to assist with meeting the financial match, participation of current and new providers, community and family engagement, and county readiness for early launch in January 2015. For more information on the "Statement of County Readiness," please go [here](#). The written statements are due June 30, 2014, and will be reviewed and scored by a panel of experts.

FSSA will host two webinars to explain the application and selection process to interested parties in each county. The first webinar is scheduled for June 12 at 9:30 a.m. EST. A second webinar will be held a week before the final submissions are due to address any last-minute questions or concerns.

In conjunction with the selection of the five pilot counties, FSSA continues to work through the major design phases of the program, which include devising plans for the longitudinal study for students, monitoring the design and implementation of a new kindergarten readiness assessment and the program accountability system, establishing guidelines and activation of fundraising activities, and making modifications to interagency IT and staffing infrastructure to support the pilot program.

In addition, HEA 1004, which establishes this program, requires a report from the prekindergarten and early learning study commission due to the Legislative Council November 1, 2014. The data collected in that report will further guide the design of the program and the implementation process.

The \$10 million pilot will be funded by reversions from FSSA's budget, with an opportunity for private dollar matching funds of up to \$5 million to further expand the program to additional students in the pilot counties.

At the request of the State Board of Education, FSSA will present an update on the pilot program and timeline at today's board meeting. Information and updates are available at <http://in.gov/fssa/4899.htm>.

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